

VZCZCXRO0227  
PP RUEHIK  
DE RUEHKV #1915/01 3091604  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 051604Z NOV 09  
FM AMEMBASSY KYIV  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8735  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA PRIORITY  
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KYIV 001915

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CDC](#) [SOCI](#) [PREL](#) [AMED](#) [CASC](#) [XH](#) [UP](#)

SUBJECT: UKRAINE: FIGHTING THE FLU WITH GARLIC AND ONION

REF: A) 09 KYIV 01890 B) 09 KYIV 01893 C) 09 KYIV 01900  
D) 09 KYIV 01911

KYIV 00001915 001.2 OF 002

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED, NOT FOR INTERNET DISTRIBUTION

¶1. (U) Summary. In a broadcast to the nation on November 4, President Yushchenko accused his political rivals of criminal negligence for their handling of the H1N1 outbreak. Prime Minister Tymoshenko, one of the "accused", did not help her case when she on the same day publicly indicated that she preferred eating lemon, onion and garlic to fight off the flu rather than getting vaccinated. WHO Ukrainian country office head Igor Pokanevych, meanwhile, said publically that only a mass H1N1 vaccination of the population will stop the epidemic. Yushchenko urged Ukrainians to overcome their negative attitude toward vaccines in general and protect themselves with available flu shots. End Summary.

YUSHCHENKO CHARGES OPPONENTS WITH NEGLIGENCE  
-----

¶2. (U) In the latest episode of a high-level contest to claim credit and assign blame for Ukraine's flu outbreak, Yushchenko accused Tymoshenko, Party of the Regions leader Yanukovich and Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) speaker Lytvyn of criminal negligence for their handling of the epidemic. In a televised address to the nation, Yushchenko claimed his opponents were aware of a flu outbreak when they held their mass election campaign rallies and compared the events to May Day rallies in Kyiv held just days after the Chernobyl disaster. "I see not only moral, but criminal responsibility here," Yushchenko said on TV and reportedly asked the Prosecutor General's Office "to open a criminal investigation into the cases of negligence" amongst Ukraine's top health officials and government members.

GARLIC, ONION AS ALTERNATIVE TO VACCINES - TYMOSHENKO  
-----

¶3. (U) Tymoshenko, addressing residents of Ivano-Frankivsk in western Ukraine, said that people must decide whether to get vaccinated or protect themselves by "traditional" methods. "I am not vaccinated. I am protecting myself like everybody -- with lemon, onion, garlic [...]. I think the best way to protect your health is through well-known means," Tymoshenko said on local TV.

¶4. (SBU) The Ministry of Health, following the WHO guidelines, advised residents of non-quarantined regions to get vaccinated against seasonal flu. Yushchenko also called on the Ukrainians to overcome their negative attitude toward vaccines and protect themselves with available flu shots. [Note: Currently, Ukraine has seasonal flu vaccines but no H1N1 vaccines. Two H1N1 vaccines, produced by Russia and Canada, are currently undergoing a registration process in Ukraine and could be available in December 2009-January 2010. End Note.]

15. (U) WHO Ukrainian country office head Igor Pokanevych underscored the importance of vaccination in an interview with German News agency Deutsche Welle. According to Pokanevych, only a mass vaccination of the population with H1N1 vaccines will stop the flu outbreak in Ukraine. Answering a question about the availability of H1N1 vaccines in Ukraine, Pokanevych said the WHO has the capability to import the vaccines relatively quickly, should the situation in Ukraine present a real threat. At the same time, however, he cautioned that the H1N1 vaccine is in high demand around the world, not just in Ukraine.

LATEST STATISTICS

-----

16. (U) According to the Ministry of Health, at least 87 people have now died and more than 250,000 have become sick with flu-like symptoms over the past three weeks in Ukraine. The actual number of confirmed cases of swine flu, however, is very small, primarily due to the lack of test results. The outbreak affects 11 out of 25 of Ukraine's regions.

COMMENT

-----

17. (SBU) Tymoshenko's public snub of flu vaccinations indicates a dangerous tendency among Ukrainians to rely on home remedies and shun modern medical practices. Already few Ukrainians receive annual flu vaccinations and are skeptical of their safety. The problem extends beyond flu vaccinations as well. General childhood immunization rates have fallen in the past few years as a result of sensational stories in the press of children dying as a result of routine vaccinations. It is likely many will shun H1N1 vaccines

KYIV 00001915 002.2 OF 002

once they do arrive here unless the government quickly unites behind a strong public relations campaign, something that will be difficult given the ongoing presidential campaign. End Comment.

PETTIT